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***Slavery and Abolition* 2016, 37(3), 505-520.**

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DOI link to article:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2016.1208910>

Date deposited:

09/12/2016

Embargo release date:

16 March 2017



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Common ground: Positioning Ireland within studies of Slavery, Anti-Slavery and Empire

Fionnghuala Sweeney

This article positions Ireland as a significant literary and political space for fugitive slaves, and for black anti-slavery activism more generally. William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, Samuel Ringgold Ward, Henry Highland Garnet and Amanda Smith were amongst those who visited and wrote about Ireland in the antebellum and postbellum periods. Their writing portrays Ireland and their Irish experience quite differently, but in ways that help position Ireland within the wider political currents of slavery, anti-slavery and empire. It considers Ireland as a literary space which facilitated the publication of black and abolitionist literature in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The article also evaluates some of the literary and historical opportunities that exist to elaborate the theme of Ireland, slavery, anti-slavery and empire, and situates the following articles as examples of this emerging body of work.

‘The Irish are indeed a strange people. How varied their aspect, how contradictory their character! Ireland, the land of genius and degradation, of great resources and unparalleled poverty, noble deeds and the most revolting crimes, the land of distinguished poets, splendid orators, and the bravest of soldiers, the land of ignorance and beggary!’

William Wells Brown, *Three Years in Europe*, 1852¹

William Wells Brown’s reflection on Ireland portrays it as a space of political, cultural and social extremes, a contradictory site of emiseration, moral ruin and emancipatory potential. His brief visit to Dublin in August 1849, was part of a longer tour undertaken of the UK and France

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over a three year campaign to ‘powerfully advocate the cause of “those in bonds” as one who had actually been “bound with them”’.² One of line of black abolitionists, fugitives and activists who visited Ireland in the nineteenth century, including Olaudah Equiano, Charles Lennox Remond, Samuel Ringgold Ward, William G Allen, Henry Highland Garnet, William C. Nell, Sarah Parker Remond, and Amanda Smith, Brown was following immediately in the footsteps of his most celebrated precursor, Frederick Douglass, who had toured Britain and Ireland from 1845-47, and was so taken with his experience that he considered moving his family to the U.K. and settling permanently in Scotland.³

Brown’s descriptions offer one of the few extant glimpses of nineteenth-century Ireland delivered by a witness whose political affiliations, though not uncomplicated, can be considered neither imperial nor nationalist. His account is also strikingly free from the equivocation that might understandably, and in Douglass’ case occasionally did attend the complicated witness of poverty and plenty, suffering and justice, hunger and worth, that nineteenth-century Ireland forced upon visitors.⁴ With an empathy unmatched in the accounts of other sojourners, Brown acknowledged that ‘All the recollections of poverty which I had ever beheld, seemed to disappear in comparison with what was then before me’, tacitly providing a parallel with the United States, as the only context with which he was previously familiar, as well as stark recognition of material vulnerability of the body and the immanent threat to life posed by chronic extreme hunger.⁵ In the description of the ‘sickly and emaciated-looking creatures, half naked’ of Brown’s account and the ‘stumps of men’ that inhabit Douglass’ 1846 report to William Lloyd Garrison, then, lies an implicit acknowledgement of one of the concrete historical particularities through which the nineteenth-century Irish body is constituted as an instance of sovereign failure and violently extirpated political subjectivity.⁶ In these nineteenth-century African-American accounts of Ireland, the socio-economics of slavery and the ecology of empire come face to face. For if the archetype of slavery is social

death, famine produces the ghost of a subject whose plea for subsistence in the face of ecological disaster is the all but final iteration of the subjugated body biologically divested of social and cultural capacity.

Their experience of enslavement and subsequent escape had left Brown and Douglass familiar with danger and unrelenting in opposing its violent impositions. Self-emancipation was one of the most radical forms of slave resistance, producing sovereignty from social death and the claim to citizenship from biological expendability. Both Douglass in 1845 and Brown in 1849 travelled as fugitives, having escaped the South in 1838 and 1834 respectively. Although celebrated abolitionist agitators and authors by the time they left the U.S. on their transatlantic campaigns, and although British soil was free soil, their self-emancipation did not provide legal freedom. The claim their former masters could continue to stake on them as chattel until they were fully manumitted meant that payment of compensation to the market value of the individual concerned, to their legal owner, was the only guarantee of future liberty. Monies raised by British and Irish friends and paid to Hugh Auld facilitated Douglass' return to the U.S., while in 1849 Brown refused to allow the requisite 325 dollars to be paid to 'purchase[...] my body and soul' on the grounds that 'God made me as free as he did Enoch Price' (his former master).⁷

Fugitivity was both a legal status, positioning the self-emancipated in the no-man's-land between slavery and freedom, and, as marshalled by those who travelled, advocated, wrote and embodied its violent contradictions and precarious victories, an embrace of a radically anomalous subject position. Marked by his or her insistence on an emancipatory logic that positioned the African American men, women and children as sovereign of their own bodies, the fugitive equally positioned that body as a form of sovereign refusal, a resistance to political, ideological and territorial conscription that allowed the fugitive subject to remain, regardless of his or her cultural integration or public success in host societies, a person apart. As Frederick

Douglass said of his time in Ireland and Britain, he was ‘not a fugitive *from* slavery – but a fugitive *slave*. He was a fugitive . . . not *from* slavery, but *in* slavery’.⁸ As persons who gave ‘the living lie to the doctrine of the inferiority of the African race’, then, fugitive black abolitionists also provided living testimony to state-sanctioned oppression, the failure of republicanism, and acted as a presence disruptive of international as much of national territorial union.⁹ Fugitivity was a position occupied as well as a condition produced.

For those travelling activists – Wells Brown, Allen, Douglass, Lennox Remond, Parker Remond, Ringgold Ward, Equiano, Garnet and Nell – who campaigned in Ireland as part of a series of international crusades to bring an end to slavery around the Atlantic in the context of their own or other’s fugitivity, putting pen to paper to record their experiences, therefore, involved acts of looking as subjects as well as acts of looking at subjects encountered on their travels. Travelling and writing about it were linked aspects and expressions of freedom. As consequential, however, is the relationship established between activism, fugitivity, diaspora and the significance of the black abolitionist literary legacy in relation to their spaces of circulation and activity, as well as to those of their origin in the United States. Nineteenth-century African-American activists are now conventionally understood as transnational political subjects, whose overseas experience casts new light on their activities in North America or the Caribbean, before and after their transatlantic travels, and prompts revised understandings of the aesthetic politics of diaspora. Attention to the ways in which diaspora allows national territories and their conventional cultural configuration to unfold into the transnational and be transformed by it, however, remains scant. Slavery presented one of the significant ethical challenges to Atlantic politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, regardless of the relative degree of economic or other complicity, or capacity for sovereign action any particular political space or national community, including Ireland, could demonstrate.

In the Anglophone world, black emancipatory activism played out as a series of cultural events that inscribed national territories into transnational geographies of freedom. That activism was in conflict, until 1834, with the state of slavery affairs that characterized Britain's first empire. Afterwards, as a result of colonial expansion, imperial anti-slavery and indenture, African-American abolitionism was somewhat more aligned with those of the second. Black travel writing and autobiography provide two select instances of these shifting relations. Both concern the ways in which the connection between literary production and cultural space is mediated, as well as the degree and kind of transnational trajectories that are given legitimation in narratives of the past as they take shape in the politics of the present. Olaudah Equiano's birthplace, for example, and, as a result his relationship to both Africa and America has over the past decade seemed to challenge the integrity of his account as an historically verifiable autobiographical act. Regardless of the accuracy of the details of his life recorded in his *Interesting Narrative*, however, (which in any case do nothing to negate the literary merits of the work), the text itself, (and indeed Equiano's British and Irish activities), have a widely accepted and easily authenticated relationship with local anti-slavery societies and with British and Irish publishing houses. Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* was published in Dublin in 1791, placing it, particularly given his claims to have been stolen from Africa and to have acquired free status as a British subject, as a specific iteration of a literary geography that positions it as a regionalist text taking shape within the Irish cultural and political body before the Act of Union, (passed in 1800), and more generally against the context of empire as it subsequently expanded east and south into Asia and Africa.¹⁰

There are other important examples of the integration of African-American texts to the Irish cultural sphere. Dublin Quaker and abolitionist, Richard Webb, was responsible for publishing several seminal works dealing with American slavery.¹¹ The most important of these was perhaps Douglass' *Narrative*, which sold out several runs in the period from September

1845, when Douglass arrived in Ireland, until January 1846, when he sailed for Liverpool.¹² The Dublin imprints, of which there were three, marked more than a change in publishing venue. Not only did they involve a progressive Atlanticization of the text, with the introduction of new material by Douglass in the form of a preface, a new frontispiece portrait which was subsequently dropped and the inclusion of an extensive range of supplementary material, the Dublin editions firmly map Ireland within the *Narrative*'s textual geography. These artefacts of his Irish experiences are articulations of a subjective dynamic, that remains particular, localized and woven in to social and economic networks to which they confer and acquire particular contextualized meaning. The *Narratives* published by Webb in 1845 and 1846 are Irish texts.

Douglass' *Narrative* is perhaps the clearest and most notable instance of a literary work whose publishing history positions it with an Irish context conducive to consideration as a transnational Irish as well as black diasporic text, in which political, cultural and economic strains of antislavery and empire come together and are given significance by the narrative's territorialized context.¹³ It helps to situate the Hibernian Anti-slavery Society as an influential vehicle for black self-emancipatory activism, framing Ireland, where African-American fugitives and abolitionists hit landfall in Europe, as an ambiguous peripheral space with a complex relationship to slavery and empire. Taken in conjunction with some of his later writing on Ireland, and that dealing with the British imperial presence in Egypt towards the end of the nineteenth century in particular, it provides a route through which longer histories of black and white anti-slavery, including that targeting slavery in Africa, take shape in relation to imperial expansion and its related rhetoric of freedom and economic development.¹⁴ At mid-century, however, the stakes were high for African American fugitives, for whom U.S. national and British imperial territory were clearly framed as dichotomous geographies of slavery and freedom. This, amongst other things, resulted in a tendency for some African-American

sojourners, Douglass included, to be less sympathetic to the poverty of the majority than the comparisons they sometimes drew with plantation slavery might have suggested.¹⁵ Indeed, Samuel Ringgold Ward's description of his Irish visits emphasized the 'degradation' and 'filth' that was rife, as 'self-chosen, self-imposed'.¹⁶ He was equally emphatic about Irish- and African-American relations in the U.S.:

the man who on his native bog is unwashed and unshaved, a fellow lodger with his pig in a cabin too filthy for most people's stables or styies, is, when arriving in America, the Negro's birthplace . . . one of the first to ridicule and abuse the free Negro--the Negro, who has yet to learn how to sink into such depths of degradation as the Irishman has just escaped from! The bitterest, most heartless, most malignant, enemy of the Negro, is the Irish immigrant.¹⁷

On the other hand, the radical Henry Highland Garnet, who visited Ireland in 1850, and whose few reports of his experience suggest he may have had quite an interesting time, drew clear lines of separation between Ireland and Irish America. In an attack on Irish-American lawyer Charles 'Pat' O'Connor, who was speaking against the emancipation of U.S. slaves, reported in the *Weekly Anglo-African* in 1860, Garnet 'regretted [O'Connor's] identity with [Irish] people'. In fact he 'regretted that O'Connor belonged to any race at all', and expressed a belief that 'if Mr. O'Connor had uttered such sentiments in Dublin, Belfast, or the wild districts of Tipperary, the men would have stoned him, and the daughters of the Emerald Isle would have whipped him within an inch of his life with their garters'.¹⁸

The importance of Ireland to black visitors inevitably changed over time. If the imperative for antebellum African-American visitors to Ireland was freedom, and therefore engagement with transatlantic structures primarily linking Ireland and the United States, then arguably Emancipation reduced the significance of Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, in African-American political life. Amanda Smith's 1893 *Autobiography* positions Ireland as part of a wider set of relationships established, post-slavery, between African-American activists and the British empire, in the home nations and across West African and India. Smith's cursory

treatment of Ireland mentions only meetings in Dublin and Belfast, but she does refer to her ‘friend, Mrs Margaret Davis, whom God raised up to help me so while in Africa’, suggesting ways in which transnational networks of women’s activism, including those operating in Ireland, and which were often linked to membership of religious societies, continued to operate, if in reduced ways, in the post-slavery period.¹⁹

Sustained work on African-American women’s experience of Ireland remains to be done, but there are other notable literary instances of the ways in which the Irish relationship with slavery and empire took shape. The literary endeavours of R.R. Madden remain largely overlooked, although *A Twelvemonths Residence in the West Indies*, (1835) written while, as a British civil servant, he was involved in overseeing the interim apprenticeship of those enslaved in the British Caribbean, provides a significant example of Irish writing on slavery, and rare fragments of the first-person accounts of African-born Muslims.²⁰ Still more significant was his publication in 1840 of the only slave narrative to emerge from the Spanish America before abolition, Juan Francisco Manzano’s *Poems by a Slave on the Island of Cuba, recently Liberated, with the History of the Life of the Negro Poet, Written by Himself* (1840).²¹ Madden translated Manzano’s work and presented it to the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention in London in the same year. In so doing he opened a window onto slavery in the Spanish Caribbean for those antislavery activists operating internationally from a British imperial position, including Daniel O Connell, whose attentions were otherwise focused on the African trade, on North America and increasingly on India. Notably, although they were otherwise very different in the backgrounds from which they came and in the lives that they led, Madden, like O Connell, was distinguished in Atlantic anti-slavery circles by the fact that he was a Catholic.²² Indeed Madden’s faith played an important role in underpinning an antislavery position that arose in the often contradictory context of nationalist sympathies, imperial opportunity, religious

anomaly, professional opportunism and extensive travel and occasional residence in Western Asia, North and West Africa and Australia as well as around the Atlantic.

The extensive travel writing that emerged as a result constitutes one of the most extensive and unrecognized bodies of literary work produced by an Irish person in the nineteenth century.²³ It provides evidence of a strong transnational consciousness, informed but not limited by religious faith, tied to national origin but constantly on the move, ethically critical yet conscious of the opportunities of empire, weaving traceable links between Ireland, slavery and anti-slavery in ways that move well beyond established bodies of criticism. It offers, as does eighteenth and nineteenth-century black writing produced in or about Ireland, if in clearly distinguishable and discrete ways, the opportunity to open up differential religious, linguistic and geographical approaches to Irish transnationalism that move beyond current critical tendencies to treat the transatlantic - and slavery as its defining characteristic - and the imperial as two distinct hinterlands.

Yet, as bodies of historical, literary and other disciplinary evidence, the transatlantic and the imperial are already in conversation as part of a wider transnational trajectory that emerges relationally, in dialogue with the shifting boundaries of Irish territory and its attendant meanings across time and place. To return to Madden's most significant anti-slavery publication for example, *Poems* also contains an essay by Madden on a 'subject which peculiarly demands the attention of the people and clergy of Ireland', viz the 'Necessity of Separating the Irish in American from the Sin of Slavery'.²⁴ Writing with regret of the 'opinion of the Irish settlers in America on the question of slavery', Madden makes the conduct and opinions of emigrants the ethical responsibility of Irish society and the Irish polity. The piece is worth quoting at length:

our countrymen abroad . . . should not be allowed to depart from our own shores, ignorant that there does not exist in nature, in religion, or in civil polity, a reason for robbing any man of his

liberty, be he black or white . . . The fact must be forced on their attention, that slavery has no sanction from their church – that to devote one fourth part of the habitable globe to perpetual bloodshed and warfare – to give up the vast continent of Africa to the ravages of the man-robbers who deal in flesh and blood . . . is a monstrous system of cruelty that . . . is intolerable and unjust. . . . Of the necessity that exists for diffusing sounder opinions on the subject of slavery, I am sure I need bring forward no further argument than this – that if the political influence of the Irish settlers and emigrants of America were exerted in favour of the cause of the abolition of slavery in the United States, that system could not possibly endure!²⁵

Like most non-fictional texts addressing slavery, *Poems* is a formally and politically complex composite work.²⁶ Its shifting address and collaborative authorship map anti-slavery geographies, whose scope – incorporating Spain and Spanish America, the United States, Britain, Ireland and Africa - finds few parallels. If its centre of gravity lies in the self-emancipatory act of autobiography and the prior but related poetic that, like Phillis Wheatley in another national literary and linguistic context, transforms the creative act into a larger art of resistance, however, the radical agency of the enslaved subject is not the only one in transnational play. Madden, as the text's translator and editor, is partly responsible for its ethical cargo in an anti-slavery environment in which the North American slave narrative was yet to emerge as the predominant abolitionist literary form and its most potent propaganda.²⁷ His insertion of this appeal recognizes the potential of Manzano's work as a vehicle through which the case for mass social change and associated political action may be made. Before the mass migrations that accompanied the famine and post-famine years normalized emigration to the still-expanding United States as providing a legitimate opportunity to seek a better life elsewhere, Madden made clear of the nature of these ungoverned acts of Irish settlement.

Likewise he was clear on the interconnectedness of an Atlantic system that included Africa as well as Europe and America, and therefore of the mutually imbricated set of social responsibilities that informed transnational ethical culture. His call for national accountability for moral action and social justice elsewhere, on the level of the individual and of that of the

collective, is an intervention as morally significant as, and which arguably finds full expression in, the much-noted 'Address from the People of Ireland', to which Madden was a signatory. The appeal was directed at the World Anti-slavery Convention, (at which Charles Lennox Remond, who carried the address from Ireland to the U.S. was also present), however, whose mission was 'The universal extinction of slavery and the slave-trade, and the protection of the rights and interests of the enfranchised populations in the British Possessions, and of all persons captured as slaves'.²⁸ As Douglas Maynard notes, the Convention 'marked the beginning of the sustained movement toward international organization that has led to today's extensive network of world conferences and international agencies'.²⁹ In Madden's work, therefore, a clear link can be detected between ethical strains of imperial endeavour, explicit anti-slavery opinion, the political consequences of mass migration and activist obligations.

Nini Rodgers' *Ireland, Slavery, Anti-slavery: 1612-1865*, (2007) has opened up the study of Ireland in relation to slavery and Anti-slavery, helping to position the established and emerging discussions that co-exist with or respond to her work in dialogue with wider currents in Black Atlantic, American and Caribbean studies.³⁰ In conjunction with the ground-breaking work done on the U.K. context by Richard Blackett, on the Irish by Douglas Riach, and on the local by Lee Jenkins, this work has provided rich ground for further research as well as confirming the significance of the object of study itself.³¹ Here, in her 'Foreward', Rodgers points to the major historical work undertaken in reconstituting lost narratives of transatlantic connection. She provides an historiographical overview of the work to date, paying special attention to the intellectual history of a set of interests that emerged in the wake of Independence and which positions the British Caribbean as the most significant area of initial interest, but also notes the perennial difficulties faced in historical work in a context in which, on the Irish side, two centuries of Irish public history was lost in the Custom House fire of

1922, while, in the Caribbean, related problems of material record and the preservation and survival of the archive are in play.

Such difficulties are not, as the growing body of research on Ireland, slavery, and antislavery testifies, insuperable. Those evidentiary roadblocks also provide the opportunity to explore the evidence bases that do exist, though they have heretofore remained methodologically marginal, including French and Spanish language material; literature, travel and life writing and wider print culture in Ireland; the performative – the popular, informal and established stage; the musical, as a body of unwritten and written cultural knowledge; the religious; the visual image as a mode of representation in its own right, and as it produces meaning in relation to the literary, the performative and the musical; the ethnographic and the folkloric, the latter as they present in languages other than standard English, including Creole and potentially, given the major language shift that occurred in the nineteenth century and the difficulty this may present for a full understanding of anti-slavery literature and activism conducted through the medium of English, in Irish.

In the field of literary studies, a range of textual and literary examples aside from the seminal work of black abolitionist writers, performers and activists, whose work must occupy centre stage in this debate, along with that of key Irish abolitionists, provide a rich source of critical debate. Those texts linking Ireland, in sometimes surprising ways, to slavery and antislavery, include, (but are not limited to) Richard Webb's *The Life and Letters of Captain John Brown* (1861), published at the outset of the U.S. Civil War and, given its subject matter marking a major development in the passivist Quaker position on abolition that had previously obtained; the anonymously authored anti-Catholic spoof of Harriet Beecher Stowe's work, *Poor Paddy's Cabin*, (1854) in the poetry of Thomas Moore which heavily inflected Wells Brown's identification with the landscape of Dublin, in the poetry of Thomas Dermody and the lyrics of John Collins, in Edmund Burke's 'Sketch of a Negro Code', (1780) in Maria

Edgeworth's novel of manners, *Belinda* (1801), and 'The Good Aunt' and 'The Grateful Negro' published in *Popular Tales* (1804), in Jonathan Swift's allegorical *Gulliver's Travels*, (1726) and the speeches of Richard Brindsley Sheridan, (1842).³² These examples aside, greater understanding of the readership and circulation of pro- and antislavery texts in Ireland more generally would help shed light on public and private reading culture and its relationship with transnational politics. Theatre history and performance studies offer related opportunities to expand the current body of knowledge, through examination of the work of Black actors in Ireland in the nineteenth century, including, amongst others, Ira Aldridge, who became a Brother Mason in Dublin in 1838, and Mary Webb.³³ Likewise, tracing the history of minstrel shows and of theatre adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, of the representation of blackness and colonialism in mainstream theatre, for example in performances of *Othello* and *The Tempest*, provide potentially productive routes of exploration. In the twentieth century, links between Ireland and empire, mediated by questions of enslavement are evident in the *Casement Report* on the Belgian Congo of 1904, and the *Amazon Journal* of 1911.³⁴

These are instances of written material that sit easily within the domain of the literary, are relatively easily accessed and present few formal difficulties to literary or historical reading. Such texts deal explicitly with slavery and empire in its contemporary context, and with anti-slavery as a pressing political imperative. Challenging work, however, remains to be done in the archive to recover less obvious connections between Ireland, slavery and empire, particularly as the field moves beyond the Americas, as for example in the activities of Daniel Haughton (1740?-1791) during his exploration of West Africa for the African Association, or as the writing and activism of Annie Besant née Wood (1847-1933), and its afterlives in India into the period of independence illustrate.³⁵ In similar vein, the history of Irish people involved in military campaigns, colonial governance and missionary activity in British India and throughout colonial and post-colonial Africa offers an important route into a debate gradually

extending beyond established configurations of the Anglophone Atlantic. Still more significantly, major work remains to be done on newspaper and periodical culture in Ireland in the nineteenth century. The pamphlets produced by the Hibernian Ladies Anti-slavery Society, for example, are an important source of anti-slavery writing, as well as indicative of the importance of women in anti-slavery activism, which, in Ireland as elsewhere, provided access to the public domain from which women were more typically excluded. Beyond this, the ways in which slavery and anti-slavery were reported in the unionist and, as David Gleeson's significant study of editorials and reportage in the run up to and during the U.S. Civil War demonstrates, the nationalist press provides important insight into the ways in which different strains of Irish nationalism took shape in relation to American slavery and Emancipation. As Gleeson shows, editorial positions adopted from mid-century onwards complicate debates around the emergence of race, particularly whiteness, as it is understood in U.S. literature in relation to immigration, free labour and black enslavement. In terms of the importance of periodical culture more generally, the Irish publication, circulation and readership context presents the same significant challenges around questions of genre, public consumption, materiality and the politics of affect as Victorian periodical culture – as the pioneering work of Fionnuala Dillane shows – more generally.³⁶

This object of study therefore demands much of disciplines, as does the post-slavery context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which has seen a flourishing of literary work that refocuses attention on the aesthetic possibilities of return to historically fraught and painful questions whose legacy remains persistent and pressing. In the opening section of this special issue, 'Bodies of experience', it is to the understanding of Irishness as a malleable category of race and gender in intersectional sites of slavery and empire that Greg Forter turns in his article on Marlon James's neo-slave narrative, *The Book of Night Women* (2009). "A good hand and a better whip" explores James's novel as what Susan Buck-Morss calls an 'undisciplined'

story, which ‘contests the representational hegemony of the US with respect to African experience in the New World’. Focusing on the politics of affect as it mediates relationships between the story’s Irish overseer, Robert Quinn, as an embodiment of colonial Enlightenment rationality and the enslaved woman, Lilith, at the heart of the story, Forter examines James’s creative attempt to excavate the role of Irish in plantation society, in particular the suggestion that ‘Quinn’s solidarity with black bodies-in-pain is premised upon his homologous yet (emphatically) non-identical suffering at the hands of the British’.

If Forter’s article places the body in pain centre stage and emphasizes the potential and limitations of sexual intimacy in mitigating the structures of coercive power slavery establishes, Barbara Suess turns to the potential of genealogical cargo and habitual interaction as a source of political alignment for Irish subjects of mixed ancestry and their family members. In her ‘Tale of Two Cobbes’ the embodied relations of Ireland to empire take shape in the person of the Anglo-Irish-Indian, Henry Clermont Cobbe (1811-1855). Clermont Cobbe’s service as a mixed-race officer in the multi-racial Second West India Regiment of the British army reveals the importance, Suess argues, of everyday relations as instances of political behaviour that shaped inter-racial relationships within the regiment during and after emancipation. Suess furthers her argument with regard to the importance of proximity by suggesting that Clermont Cobbe’s shared upbringing in Ireland with his cousin, Frances Power Cobbe, influenced her abolitionist writings, and thereby showing how the family case history provides useful insight into the ‘complex relationship, in the nineteenth century, between human rights and empire’.

Section two, ‘The politics of humanitarianism protest’, provides three distinctive accounts of the ways in which agendas expanded, coalesced and diverged in debates around humanitarian concerns and political advantage, and the methods by which they might best be achieved. Empire remains centre stage in Maurice Bric’s strategic intervention into discussions of anti-slavery, complicating their predominantly Atlantic emphasis by focusing on the interest

shown by the most notable figure in Irish politics in the first half of the nineteenth century, Daniel O Connell, in slavery in India. The article examines O Connell's views on the role of empire in promulgating economic progress in conjunction with humanitarian values, and the ways in which he linked the need for land reform to the ending of slavery. Angela Murphy's article provides a counterpoint to the weight given by O Connell to India in the World's Convention in 1840, by turning to a local incident that acquired national and transnational significance through the involvement of the Hibernian Anti-slavery Society and Daniel O Connell's Loyal National Repeal Association in the same year. The arrival on the west coast of the *Robert Kerr*, an emigrant ship intending to carry Irish indentured servants to Jamaica as part of the 'Jamaica Emigration Scheme', sparked protests in Limerick and cooperative organization against the scheme by the Society and the Association. The incident, Murphy shows, speaks to wider concerns held by the HASS and the LNRA, the former concerning the introduction of indentured Indian labour, known as 'Hill Coolies', to replace slave labour lost on emancipation, and the detriment to the development of a free and just society in Jamaica; the latter concerning the effects of emigration on the emergence of a politically independent society in Ireland. For each organization, Murphy shows, questions of free and unfree labour were at this moment central, if in different ways, to their individual reform agendas. Lastly in this section, Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie considers the possibility of local and transnational solidarity as an overlooked aspect of the relationship between Ireland and Black America, highlighting the campaigning work done by Frederick Douglass and Daniel O Connell. 'Black Abolitionists, Irish Supporters, and the Brotherhood of Man' disputes 'prevailing views of inevitable racial tensions . . . trac[ing] a more internationalist consciousness through lectures, speeches, writings, public pronouncements, and popular reactions'.

In the third and final section, 'The geographies of race' 'Gleeson's work retains O Connell as a lynchpin of Irish abolitionist opinion, as 'Failing to "Unite with the Abolitionists"' turns

to the crucial question of the ways in which the early nationalist press situated itself in relation to American slavery, showing that there was a generally observable reformulation of O Connell's anti-slavery legacy in response to changing conditions of Irish Americans and the Civil War in the United States. Lisa Merrill's 'Amalgamation, Moral Geography, and "Slum Tourism"' follows with an exploration of the intimacies, antagonisms, creative competition and shared poverty of Irish Americans and African-Americans in New York's notorious Five Points district. This nuanced investigation into the ways in which Irish and African Americans sharing space 'on the streets and stages of antebellum New York' provides transformative insight into the undisciplined social and cultural ferment that characterized a city district. Five Points was at once a living space and a living theatre in which popular performances that included skilled competitive dance, minstrelsy, and voluntary association that included inter-racial socialization and partnership, and mob violence, were part of the expressive conditions of everyday life. Merrill shows that Five Points was not only a contested and performative space, but also a place of spectacle, as journalists, reformers and writers of sensation narratives homed in, for various reasons, on its seductive depravity, and 'bourgeois voyeuristic spectators were drawn [to the area's] streets and stages as "slum tourists"'.

Like Forter's, Merrill's work points to human experience and interaction as core conditions of the local, and to the significance of the political conditions that underpin and are produced by aesthetic expression, be it literary, performative or otherwise. This special issue tracks major political currents and their transnational effects on one small island space and on the locales occupied by those claiming that island as a point of origin or in formulating a recognizable political identity. Each article testifies to the nature of the local as a point in space and time through which systems and events of global significance are mediated and take on their own iterative character. That is their common ground. From the representation of plantation slavery in the Caribbean, to the debates around free labour around the Atlantic as a keystone of social

justice, and the idealism of empire in relation to civilization in India; through black writing on Ireland, and the embodied reality of Irish inter-imperial relations; in the complex relationships between nationalist print culture and international events and the dynamic proximity of urban cultures in a period of institutionalized violence and social flux, this series of articles illustrates the difficulties of arriving at a singular, coherent, stable narrative of Ireland's place in the overlapping matrices of slavery and empire, and within the creative and critical geographies this area of study has the potential to produce. Each piece unfolds a singular microcosm of historical experience or artistic endeavour, tied to contextual complexities that speak of irresolvable tensions, enduring silences, often conflicting alliances and creative potential. Together they gesture towards the ongoing project will produce a sum that is other than the sum of its parts.

¹ William Wells Brown, *Three Years in Europe, or, Places I have seen and People I have Met*. (London: Charles Gilpin, 1852), 12, 19-20. A revised account of Brown's Irish visit is contained in the Wells Brown's later *Sketches*, though this reflection is included and remains unchanged. See William Wells Brown, *The American Fugitive in Europe. Sketches of Places and People Abroad*, (Boston: John P Jewett and Co, 1855), 49.

² Wells Brown, *Europe*, xxii.

³ See Olaudah Equiano, (pseud. Gustavus Vassa), *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*. Vol. I & II, (London: Author, 1789); Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself*, (Dublin: Webb and Chapman, 1845); Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England*, (London: John Snow, 1855); William Cooper Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution: With Sketches of Several Distinguished Colored Persons: To Which is Added a Brief Survey of the Condition and Prospects of Colored Americans*, (Boston: Robert F. Wallcut, 1855); William G. Allen, *A Short Personal Narrative by William G. Allen, (Colored American) Formerly Professor of the Greek Language and Literature in New York Central College Resident for the Last Four years in Dublin*, (Dublin: Chapman, 1860); Amanda Smith, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist: Containing an Account of Her Life Work of Faith, and Her Travels in America, England, Ireland, Scotland, India, and Africa as an Independent Missionary*, (Chicago: Meyer & Brother Publishers, 1893). See also Moses Roper, published his *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery. With an Appendix, Containing a List of Places Visited by the Author in Great Britain and Ireland and the British Isles; and Other Matter*, (Berwick-upon-Tweed: Published for the author and printed at the Warder Office, 1848). Although the title of Roper's work suggests that he visited Ireland, his list of speaking engagements at the end of the text does not include and places in Ireland. It is likely therefore that his use of "Great Britain

and Ireland' does not refer necessarily to the places he visited but rather the full title of the United Kingdom. Quote from William Farmer, author of the prefacing 'Memoir', p xii.

⁴ For a discussion of Douglass' response to the famine, see Fionnghuala Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World*, (Liverpool and Chicago: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

⁵ Wells Brown, *Europe*, 12.

⁶ Ibid, 12. Frederick Douglass to William Lloyd Garrison, Montrose, 26 February, 1846, in Philip Foner ed., *The Life and Writing of Frederick Douglass*, Volume 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 138.

⁷Wells Brown, *Europe*, xii.

⁸ John Blassingame ed. *Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One, Speeches, Debates, Interviews*, Volume 1, (New Haven: Yale University Press), 24, emphasis original. See also Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass*, 135--6.

⁹ Wells Brown, *Europe*, xxi.

¹⁰ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (Dublin: Printed for the author, 1791).

¹¹ For a full account of Webb's publishing and other activities, see Richard Harrison, *Richard Webb, Dublin Quaker Printer*, (Skibbereen: Red Barn, 1993). See also Richard Harrison, *A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Quakers*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008) for biographical information on other members of the Society of Friends involved in the Hibernian Anti-slavery Society.

¹² See Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass*, 13--36.

¹³Ibid., 13--53; 188--89.

¹⁴ For discussion of Douglass' unpublished essay 'Thoughts and Recollections of a Tour in Ireland', (1886), Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfd.24015> (accessed May 31, 2016), and of his diary of his last tour of Europe and Egypt in 1886, see Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass*, 164--86 and 138--62 respectively.

¹⁵ See Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass*, 78--88.

¹⁶ Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography*, 380.

¹⁷ Ibid., 383.

¹⁸ Henry Highland Garnet, *Weekly Anglo-African*, 28 January, 1860, Black Abolitionist Archives, Doc. No. 21796(a) Online: [http://research.udmercy.edu/digital_collections/baa/Garnet_21796\(a\)spe.pdf](http://research.udmercy.edu/digital_collections/baa/Garnet_21796(a)spe.pdf) Accessed 31 May, 2016.

¹⁹ Smith, *Autobiography*, 502.

²⁰ R.R. Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies, during the transition from slavery to apprenticeship; with incidental notice of the state of society, prospects, and natural resources of Jamaica and other islands*, (London: James Cochran and Co., 1835), 2 vols. See Fionnghuala Sweeney, "'To Redeem Our Colonial Character:' Slavery and Civilization in R.R. Madden's A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies', in *The Black and Green Atlantic. Crosscurrents of the African and Irish Diasporas*, Peter O'Neill and David Lloyd eds, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 178--93.

²¹ Juan Francisco Manzano, *Poems by a slave in the island of Cuba, recently liberated; translated from the Spanish, by R. R. Madden, M.D., with the history of the early life of the negro poet, written by himself; to which are prefixed two pieces descriptive of Cuban slavery and the slave-traffic, by R. R. M.*, (London: T. Ward & Co., 1840).

²² See David R. Murray, 'Richard Robert Madden: His Career as a Slavery Abolitionist', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 61. 241 (1972): 41--53; and Nini Rodgers, 'Richard Robert Madden, and Irish Anti-slavery Activist in the Americas', in Oonagh Walsh ed., *Ireland Abroad: Politics and Professions in the Nineteenth Century*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 19--36.

²³ Only Madden's travel writing and early novels are listed here. They include: R.R. Madden, *The Mussulman.*, (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830), 3 vols.; R.R. Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, in 1824, 1825, 1826, and 1827*, (London: Whittaker, Treacher and Co., 1833), 2 vols.; R.R. Madden, *The island of Cuba: its resources, progress, and prospects, considered in relation especially to the influence of its prosperity on the interests of the British West India Colonies* (London: C. Gilpin, 1849).

²⁴ Madden in *Poems*, 135--7, 135.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 135--136.

²⁶ See Fionnghuala Sweeney, 'Atlantic Countercultures and the Networked Text. Juan Francisco Manzano, RR Madden and the Cuban Slave Narrative *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 2004, 40.4, 401-114; and R.J. Boutelle, "'The most perfect picture of Cuban slavery': transatlantic bricolage in Manzano's and Madden's *Poems by a Slave*', *Atlantic Studies* 10.4 (2013): 528--49.

²⁷ This was challenged by the publication in 1852 of Harriet Beecher Stowe's sentimental anti-slavery novel, the controversial *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, (Boston: Jewitt, 1852).

²⁸ Baptist Missionary Society, *The Baptist Magazine for 1854*, vol 46, 4.17 (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1854), 786.

²⁹ Douglas Maynard, 'The World's Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47.3 (1960): 452--471, 452.

³⁰ Nini Rodgers, *Ireland, Slavery Antislavery: 1612-1865*, (London: Palgrave, 2007).

³¹ Richard Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002). Douglas Riach, 'Daniel O Connell and American Anti-Slavery', *Irish Historical Studies* 20 (1976): 3-25; Douglas Riach, 'Richard Davis Webb and Anti-slavery in Ireland', in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, eds. Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 149--67. Jenkins carried out some of the earliest work on Douglass in Ireland. See Lee Jenkins, 'Beyond the Pale: Frederick Douglass in Cork', *The Irish Review*, 24, 80--95,

and Lee M. Jenkins, 'The Black O'Connell: Frederick Douglass and Ireland', *Nineteenth Century Studies*, 13 (1999): 22--46.

³² Richard Webb, *The life and letters of Captain John Brown: who was executed at Charlestown Virginia, Dec. 2 1859, for an armed attack on American slavery, with notices of some of his confederates*, (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1861).

An Irishman, *Poor Paddy's Cabin; or slavery in Ireland. A true representation of facts and characters*, (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1854).

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Richard Brindsley Sheridan, *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Richard Brindsley Sheridan, with a sketch of his life*, 3 vols. (London: Harry G. Bohn, 1842).

³³ See Douglass Riach, 'Blacks and Blackface on the Irish Stage, 1830--60', *Journal of American Studies* 7.3 (1993): 231--41, 239.

³⁴ See Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania, Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s*, (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2005); and Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass*, 94--137. Roger Casement, *Congo Report* (London: British Government Publication, 1904), see Roger Sawyer ed, *Roger Casement's Diaries: 1910: The Black and the White* (London: Pimlico, 1997) 265; Roger Casement, *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement*, ed Angus Mitchell, (London: Anaconda, 1997).

³⁵ See Ann Taylor, *Annie Besant: A Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). In regard to the afterlife of slavery across empire and into independence as a form of rhetoric often mobilized in women's activism, and in radical educational practice, the work of Margaret Cousins née Gillespie (1878-1954) in India is also of some note. See Nandini Deo, *Mobilizing Religion and Gender in India: The Role of Activism*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 42--4. Likewise, the writing of Edel Quinn (1907--1944), Envoy of the Legion of Mary to Africa, and granted 'Venerable' status (the first step on the road to beatification) by the Vatican in 1994, provides an example of the ways in which bodies of work coming to light in the twentieth century may offer the opportunity to extend and complicate current scholarly strains. See *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, volume 4: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions*, eds Angela Burke, Siobhan Kilfeather, Maria Luddy, Margaret MacCurtain, Gerardine Meaney, Mairin Ni Dhonnchadha, Mary O Dowd and Clare Wills, (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 463.

³⁶ Fionnuala Dillane, 'Forms of Affect, Relationality and Periodical Encounters, or "Pine-apple for the Million"', *Journal of European Periodical Studies* 1.1 (2016): np (forthcoming). See also *Before George Eliot: Marian Evans and the Periodical Press*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).